

THE WINNING EDGE

8 Principles That Will Bring Out
The Winner in You!

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Preface: Start Your Journey

There are certain laws and principles to adhere to in order to be a winner. Winning involves success, but success isn't necessarily winning. What's the difference?

Winning goes beyond success to maximize your potential and make the most of every opportunity. Winning starts with the end in mind. Winning means being willing to take steps to the side or even to the back to come out in front in the end.

A famous basketball player who was incredibly successful in one city chose to go to another city—despite the controversy and backlash—so he could come back home and WIN the championship! A beautiful and talented singer started out as part of a popular R & B

There are many other examples of courageous people who dared to win. I have also experienced a much greater life as a result, and I want the same for you.

While it can be a tough and sometimes lonely path with hard decisions to make, it is worth it! Join me on this journey, and together, we'll take the roads less traveled to achieve *The Winning Edge* in life!

Introduction: Make the Decision to Win

I've been so blessed in my experiences as a seven-year professional football player, motivational speaker, business owner, executive, consultant, and author. Some people think, "Wow, Shawn, you've achieved so much; you must have had a great childhood." Nothing could be further from the truth!

I'm here to be honest and to let you in on the unedited version of my life; I had major challenges and obstacles. I had to repeat the first grade. I struggled with several different learning disabilities such as dyslexia, memorization, and a whole slew of other things they branded me with. I was kicked out of two schools, had some drug issues, and was voted most likely to fail.

I had a script written over my life that said, “Shawn, you’ll always struggle in school, you’ll always struggle in life, and you’ll always be broke.” Those words were programmed into my soul.

I remember being at our end-of-season football banquet during my senior year of high school. I was eating in the back of the room while hearing all my teammates get their names called for various awards and accolades. Finally, they called my name and said, “Here Shawn, thanks for participating.” All I got was a token three-year participation certificate!

Soon, all the guys were getting their pictures taken, interviewing with the press, or meeting with college coaches. I started asking myself, “Man, what about me? I can’t go out like this; I can do better—I can win too!”

If you have ever noticed, superheroes don't focus on the things they can't do. Batman isn't depressed because he can't fly like Superman. He just uses his intellectual genius and physical strengths along with his sleek Batmobile to take down the enemy. More importantly, he surrounds himself with other superheroes that make up for the things that he can't do.

I will be forever grateful to one of my superheroes, a coach who helped me save my future by giving me the opportunity to play for a junior college in Mason City, Iowa. I thought I had been given a golden ticket like Charlie and The Chocolate Factory, but during my first year I sat the bench—FOR THE ENTIRE SEASON! Not even one play!

After that I picked up the phone, called my mom

because I quit. Everything everyone had ever said about me was on constant replay in my mind. Now let's be honest, who of us hasn't felt like giving up and throwing in the towel? It's a part of all our journeys.

I can't say what eventually lit the fire under me, but something in me couldn't just give up. Football players don't just quit; even when they're injured they still find a way to attend team meetings, go to practice, and be a part of the game. I was healthy, I had made it this far and there was no way that I was going to quit without trying, not only for myself but also for my mom.

Once again, I decided "I'm choosing to win at this game of life." I started searching for and developing winning tactics, strategies, and techniques—things that weren't taught in self-help and success books at Barnes

powerful people like Thomas Edison, John F. Kennedy, and William Wilberforce did. I began to extract little nuggets of wisdom and put them into practice.

They don't teach things like this in school, but I know that if you begin to glean just a portion of these principles like I did, you will change. You will prosper in every paradigm of your life. You will influence the lives of those around you for the best, and they will want to come into the winner's circle with you!

Chapter 1: You Are Born to Win

Children can be unapologetically cruel. I clearly remember the first day of school that year, standing in line for the second grade and ready for the day to start when a teacher walked over to me, took me by the hand and told me that I was in the wrong line—that I belonged back in the first-grade line.

All my friends who were heading into second grade began laughing and saying, “Shawn, you flunked! Shawn, you’re stupid! They pointed and giggled, telling me that I needed to go be with the babies in first grade. It was so humiliating to have to sit in class with the first-graders and repeat that year’s lessons.

I began to wear the labels of those painful words;

I was in the fifth grade, I discovered there *was* a problem. I had been diagnosed with at least four learning disabilities. As if that wasn't enough, I stuttered until I was in college. To say that I was an easy target for being bullied is an understatement.

Bullying is an ongoing epidemic that should be addressed in schools and at home because it can really tear a person down and lead them to demonstrate other behaviors as a result. Due to my being bullied, I began acting out in school. I was expelled twice for disciplinary problems and by the time I graduated, my academic ranking was 154 in a class with the exact same number.

Despite that, lying somewhere deep within me, there was a seed. In every one of us, there's a powerful seed. A seed is such an amazing creation! It contains all

matures, it will build above and beyond itself. Think about this fascinating truth—*you can count the number of seeds in an orange, but you can never count the number of oranges in a seed!*

My seed had the code and instructions to be someone great. That seed said, “Shawn, one day you’ll be amazing; one day you’ll change the world!” Very few people in the world believed in me then, but my mom would always say, “Shawn, one day everyone in the world will know who you are!” I didn’t believe her for the longest time until I realized that I was born to win.

Winning is the objective! When we compete in any game or contest, we are putting forth our effort to win! Remember the games you played when you were little? Hide and Seek, Tag, Cops and Robbers, Kickball,

and Hopscotch? There was always one individual winner or one winning team.

Unfortunately, around the third or fourth grade, you begin to learn that success is more important than winning. You learn that you need to have a better education and job than your parents did, that you need to have a bigger house or better car than your neighbor, and that the zeros in your bank account define who you are.

The picture of success is almost always centered on wealth, money, and things. So now, instead of young people wanting to become teachers, firefighters, or nurses, they want to be movie stars, pop/rock/rap singers, or superstar athletes. They want prestige and fame for the bling it brings.

What exactly is this American Dream that we're

be paid on for the rest of your life, a 30-year mortgage, two kids and a dog, maxed out credit cards, and a trip on a hamster wheel going nowhere fast? A lot of people suffer depression or other mental health issues because they are constantly running after something they will never catch.

While playing seven years of professional football, I was surrounded by a bunch of men who were successful at the time; however, the average football player is broke only two years after they leave the NFL. Out of the 100 athletes I knew, probably only 20 of them would still be considered successful.

Why aren't they successful today even though they were successful 20 years ago? Because success is not static. Day by day and year by year the players are

what they have, their occupation, their associations, or their networks. It's purely external.

Have you ever noticed that some of the richest people end up overdosing or committing suicide? Why do you think that is? Because success doesn't breed happiness. I think one of the most important things I can teach you or that you can take away from this book is that *winning and success aren't the same*.

Winning is defined as gaining, resulting in, or relating to victory in a contest or competition. What Webster doesn't list in its definition is that winning is self-defined. I personally believe that winning is a life-long endeavor to get what's in you, out.

Winning means pouring yourself into your hopes and dreams and being able to share it with other people

that you can bring along the way. It's health, wealth, and legacy; it's making a difference when and where you can.

Success is defined as accomplishment of an aim or purpose, the attainment of popularity or profit. If you read that again, I'm sure your main takeaway will be the popularity or profit. Success is all about perception.

Look at social media: people are glamorizing lifestyles they really don't have to get recognition and affirmation from people they really don't know and probably will never meet. Getting 50,000 followers on social media means more to them than the peace of mind they can get from winning in what they set out to do.

To move from success to winning, let's look at an amazing principle: "*Before you can become, you must already be.*" This is a profound statement. It means that

champion, you must be a champion on the inside. If you want to be wealthy, you must be wealthy on the inside.

You can give a guy millions of dollars, but if he believes he's still poor, he'll make decisions that lead him back to poverty. This happens all the time to lottery winners, sports figures, actors, and singers. On the other hand, you can take away millions of dollars from another guy, but if he believes he is wealthy he will eventually gain it all back.

The truth is, when people only want great riches or money as their life goal, it's because their self-image isn't in order. There's a part of themselves that believes they're not worth much. If that's the case, the riches are not coming anyway because the riches disagree with what they really believe about themselves on the inside.

Therefore, if you want to know what a person is like, look at what and who are around them. People manifest what's around them all the time. You'll see issues like conflict, failure, and drama, especially in relationships.

I've seen friends invite destructive people into their circle, and soon their lives go on a downward spiral too. They end up in serious trouble, or even dead. Why? Because they are allowing what others manifested begin to manifest in them.

If you want that to stop in your own life, you must change what and whom you're hanging around or what and whom are hanging around you. You must change your mindset and belief system because you must change your inside first to manifest it on the outside.

You will manifest your win when you know you are here for a purpose, a reason, and a season; when you know you're not an accident. When you understand the truth that you have great intrinsic value, you're no longer a victim but a victor!

On my road to winning, I noticed one thing about a lot of very proficient and amazing athletes; they see themselves as winning *before* it happens. I experienced this phenomenon myself, then saw it again in someone else when I was with the Indianapolis Colts.

My roommate at the time was Zack Crockett. Zack was from Florida State, and we were having a conversation. Out of nowhere, he said, "Shawn, I'm getting a lot of reps this year. I'm starting this year."

I held back my laugh and tried to keep my

“Listen, you need some patience. You have an All-Pro running back in front of you, Marshall Faulk. You have another great running back, Lamont Warren. Then you’ve got Clifton Groce and Roosevelt Potts. All these guys are doing very well in their craft in the NFL. It might take a couple of years to get acclimated. I don’t want you to get your hopes up too high.”

Zack looked me back in my eye and said: “Bro, I’m playing this year; I’m going to start this year.” I kind of laughed it off, but I could not laugh off the confidence that was in his eyes. By the fourth or fifth game of that season, Zack Crockett was starting. He was doing an amazing job, running all over the place and smashing the competition. He went on to play 11 years in the NFL!

I started doing research on winners and how they

Muhammad Ali, how he would name the round that he was going to knock his opponent down. He would say, “I’m going to knock you out in the fourth round.” He even made a little song about it; he spoke it into the atmosphere. Guess what, in the fourth round, he knocked the dude out!

Another example from years ago was the Chicago Bears who did the Super Bowl shuffle. Back in 1983 at a football training camp, a group of guys got together and recorded themselves on a VCR (an ancient DVR for you young folks!) and made a video about how they were going to win the Super Bowl.

If you haven’t played in the NFL or any other professional sport, you have no idea how hard it is to make it to that level. It’s nearly impossible statistically. If

people could predict who would make it, they would be billionaires; there would be no need for Vegas!

Anyhow, 15 guys jumped on a stage and rapped about how they were going to win the Super Bowl. It wasn't even pre-season, it was still just camp! They made that prediction through all 17 games played that they were going to win the Super Bowl, *and did exactly that!*

The Fighting Irish of Notre Dame did it, too. Coach Lou Holtz would make the players rehearse their national championship speeches in camp. They would lift Holtz up and carry him off the field after practice. They rehearsed what they were going to say to the press. In other words, these guys had already won in their minds.

Lots of victories are determined before taking even

you begin” principle is extremely important. Some call it visualization and there is actually science behind that.

The mind can't separate what's real and what's not. What you focus on is what you manifest. When you focus on winning, or you focus on achievement, you have no choice but to manifest that. Once I adopted that winning mindset, I went from sitting the bench at my junior college to playing in the NFL. What I'm achieving now is because I am focused on winning, not success.

Play to win!

1. What false labels did you carry as a child?

2. What has your true seed been created to produce?

3. What is your personal definition of winning?

NOTES:

Chapter 2: Fight for the Dream

All goals and dreams come from an idea. In fact, you exist because of an idea or dream from someone else! So, let's talk about that—*the dream*.

Most people think, “I’m a living soul, and that’s why I dream.” Turn that around. Your dream is part of a bigger dream from above and that’s why you’re living! You have been chosen to bring that dream forth, to incubate it, and to reproduce it.

Maybe your dream is to help feed and clothe the poor; build a school, eradicate disease, be an inventor,

people's dreams. Whatever it is, you need to know that you can do it. Speak it into existence and you'll be surprised at the results you get.

What if you don't know what it is yet? You'll know you've tapped into it when you get energy just thinking about the idea. It's not like work; you enjoy it so much that you would do it for free if you could. Being paid to do it would be the icing on the cake, not your driving force.

For example, I'm a motivator. I'll encourage anyone for free, but making a business out of doing what I love helps me take care of my family. The problem comes when society steals a dream and replaces it with something else it wants you to do.

We already touched on the issue of the American

not living. That is a lie. Your dream is what you were created to do for others. If wealth comes as a result, then keep investing in your dream or the dreams of others.

Look at everything around you. What you see is the result of an idea or dream that someone had: homes, cars, TV's, phones, computers; big things like roads, bridges, schools, hospitals; even little things like pens and paper clips. None of these things happened by themselves! They began in someone's mind!

Do you have something stirring in your mind? Never allow someone to steal that dream or idea. Never allow society to crush the seed within you. It's so easy to do once you enter the rat race. People rush to work every day as I watch them driving around each morning with a mundane, robotic look; not a smile to be seen on their

It's because most folks are chasing someone else's dream—someone else's opportunity. Be fulfilled by participating in *your own* dream! When you go to Disney World, you are enjoying Walt's dream. When you eat at McDonald's, you are enjoying Ray Kroc's dream. When you board an airplane, you are enjoying the Wright Brothers' dream.

Is anyone enjoying your dream? Are you? Some of us have lost that dream because we allowed ourselves to be watered down by others who didn't believe in us or perhaps even stole our idea. If so, my advice is to turn off the media—your pads, pods, laptops, phones, and TVs for a time and just listen.

Listen for the one thing that you know will make you truly happy and fulfilled. That's your dream. Grab

produce, and reproduce. Start now and plant seeds even if you never get to enjoy the fullness of it. Disney didn't!

Dream as much as you want, and be sure to write that dream down and create what's called a *vision*. A vision is what dreamers believe to see, while others see to believe—big difference. Hellen Keller was once asked what was worse than being blind, and she said, “Having sight yet no vision.” Writing a vision is a preliminary step in manifesting it.

Be warned though, there are enemies of vision. One is double vision or di-vision: being focused on more than one thing at the same time, or when one vision is opposed to or hinders the other. I'm dealing with that right now.

I run a security company that takes so much of my

expand in that. Division is tough because your mind can't figure out what to focus on. I'm now working on getting someone else who is qualified to run the day-to-day operations at my company so I can focus on producing and reproducing my speaking dream with books and videos.

Distraction is a close cousin of division. You can't do what's necessary to move forward because too many things are pulling on you from different directions. You're busy doing so much but not accomplishing anything of real value. You're on the road to nowhere.

Then you get to the stage of deception. Deception is very dangerous because it makes you think you're doing the right thing when you're not. Often, you're the only one who doesn't know you're being deceived! Be

wary of the 3D triple threat—division, distraction and deception. They'll end your dream, becoming *die*-vision!

Now, think about the *why* of your dream. What are the reasons to win that will sustain you through storms and resistance? What personal drive or hunger feeds into your *why*? Hunger is greater than your opposition. Hunger makes you fight.

Unfortunately, our society wants to keep us well-fed, fat, and comfortable. Too much comfort can weaken your hunger and make you complacent; then you'll lose your drive and momentum. You'll go through life like you're on a conveyor belt with time manipulating you instead of you manipulating time to your advantage.

Suddenly, you'll wake up knocking on the door to 50 years old and too scared to make any major changes

have a nice house and a luxury car, but you're stuck in your job and suffering in a bad marriage because you don't want to be uncomfortable.

So, you decide to just ride life out; in the blink of an eye you wake up at 62 even more miserable. A few more years until your life ends, and ladies and gentlemen, your comfort zone has become your casket.

You need to stay hungry! Remember the *Rocky* films? Rocky Balboa was a great example of this. In the original movie, Rocky had nothing to work out with, so he found ways to condition without equipment. He had to be creative because he couldn't afford the comforts.

In *Rocky II*, he had the money to work out comfortably, but he lost the big fight in the end. His trainers were asking what in the world happened. Then

with next to nothing so he could stay *uncomfortable*.

Result: he came out as champion in the end!

Studies show that today's kids are physically weaker than kids were some years ago. The military had to actually downgrade the basic training regimen because today's recruits don't have the physical and mental strength of yesterday.

Our kids are weaker and lack stamina! It's time to reverse that! Find out what makes them hungry and create a drive to earn things and gain victories. That hunger is essential. It should create a motivation to wake up early in the morning and go for the win!

If you are suffering from stagnation, put the focus back on your *why*—the reason you are living. Are you here just to accumulate wealth for your own pleasure?

Your *why* is not in agreement if you want wealth simply for status. You have allowed the world system to devalue you. You have gone on a quest to seek value from the outside in, instead of from the inside out.

Remember, winning is fully expressing yourself mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually to leave a legacy. On a deathbed, people don't talk about how much money they made or wish they had spent more time at the office. They realize what they should have focused on—their family, their friends, and their health.

When I played in the NFL, there were certain players that opened their lockers to reveal a picture of their wife and kids. They needed a visual of their *why* in front of them.

My *why* is to work hard every day for the

bless others long after I'm gone. When your true *why* is at the center of your life, you're all in. You now have the dream and the power to fight for the WIN!

1. What dream or vision gives you energy to fight?

2. How are the 3D enemies affecting your destiny?

3. What is the *why* at the center of your life?

Chapter 3: Know Who You Are

A few years ago, I spent 3 or 4 days in Juneau, Alaska, because I was invited to speak for a huge rotary club. While I was there I planned to enjoy a boat ride, try some fishing, and get my chops around some ultra-fresh Alaskan King Salmon; it was amazing!

The tour guide picked me up and drove us over to a hatchery. He invited me in to see what looked like millions of little salmon fluttering around in these huge tanks. My jaws dropped in awe.

“Wow! What do you do with all these fish?” I

you saw earlier, and we take them a little way out into the water; then we let them down in nets and drive around in a big circle several times. That's what we call 'marking the fish', and then we let them go."

"These salmon will swim throughout the ocean, some going down to California, some even making it over to Japan. In a couple of years or so, those that are still alive find their way back to this same spot to spawn, and that's when we put out the nets and catch them; and that's your wild-caught Alaskan King Salmon!"

That got me thinking. How many times in life have we been marked the same way with things like defeat or failure? Remember when I mentioned how I failed the first grade and was documented with several learning disabilities? People would say, "Shawn, you're

With time and repetition, I was marked. Whatever I endeavored to do would fail because my identity was laced with the word “failure”. There’s no sense in talking about success and winning if you don’t deal with your identity and who you are. Your self-conscious is formed by the time you are six years old, so without a proper sense of self or who you truly are, you will cripple every opportunity and every relationship.

Don’t fret if your self-conscious has been damaged. The good news is that by positive believing and speaking through repetition, you can change the labels and delete those marks. If you want to change what’s manifesting around you, you must change what’s in you. Society is image-driven to identify you *externally*, but winners exist *internally*, from a

While playing in the NFL, I learned what the most important piece of equipment is for every player. Believe it or not, it's not the helmet. It's not the shoulder pads, the thigh pads, the cleats, or even the football. The most important piece of equipment is your *jersey!*

If you step onto the field without having an identity and purpose, your teammates won't recognize you, your opponent won't recognize you, the fans won't recognize you, and the NFL won't recognize you. You will be promptly ushered off the field and possibly arrested for trespassing!

When you step onto a game field or the field of life and you know who you are, you know where you're from, you know where you're going, and you know what your purpose is—you have power. *But if you don't know*

One of the things I've done is pull out a sheet of paper and write down, "This is who I am—I'm a child of God, I'm a leader. Leaders always look to what they're going to, not what they are going through." I meditate on this because the world is always marketing lies to us. Media is always telling you what they want you to be. Take the power back. Write down who you are, where you're going, and why. Always know for what or for whom you are playing to win.

Many years ago, when my father permanently left our household, my mom went through a traumatic time. She had a breakdown of sorts. For a few days, she pretty much left us to fend for ourselves while she went down the street to stay at my aunt's house so she could pull herself back together.

The moment she came back, I knew that my old mom had died and another person had emerged. She realized that life had shifted and she now had two roles: nurturer and dictator. She lined all six of us up from the youngest to the oldest and introduced us to a new paradigm. She had created a village to help care for the Harper kids.

There was a Vietnam vet, Mr. Rufus, who lived four houses down (back when neighbors knew each other). She had Uncle Stan, who was an informal mentor. She had Mrs. Caldwell, the neighbor across the street who knew everything that happened and could keep Momma up on where we were and what we did. Then there was Norma, who was the nurturer.

Momma's team was built to complement and

to supplement. She had a vision and she recruited people to help fulfill her mission. In addition, we had help from the government—welfare and Charity Newsies.

We'd go to Charity Newsies and sit in a room. They would call our names one at a time and give us underwear and coats. I remember those coats were made of manufacturers' leftover scraps. We always knew who got their coat from Charity Newsies because there were so many different patterns, like a quilt. In fact, we called them the "coats of many colors", but they weren't beautiful like Joseph's coat was in the Bible!

Momma didn't really attend church at the time, but she had the church bus come and pick us up regardless. We had to go to church no matter what.

Next, she made me play football. I was in the 2nd

be around more men. I had to walk 1 ½ miles each way to practice every day at age 8 or 9. By the time practice ended, it was nearly dark and I walked back home with my friends and teammates.

I can remember that day when my mom and a specialist were having a verbal altercation. After I had tested positive for those learning disabilities, he wanted me to be in those special classes (you know, the kind with padding on the floor and walls), but she refused. She said, “You’re not going to label my son!”

Instead of allowing me to be a victim, my mother stood up for me and kept me out of special education classes. She didn’t consider me disabled but instead “uniquely enabled”. I don’t know why, but she would always tell me that I would one day be a household

What about you? Do you know who you are? Take an inventory of your life and realize that much of your current life is simply a manifestation of you. If you need to, create a plan to change it. Turn off the television! Reprogram your subconscious; it's what advertisers spend billions of dollars doing to you.

Subconscious belief is deeper than just belief; it drives your actions. You can change the programming in your subconscious by speaking powerful affirmations. Talk about what you *are*, not about what you will be, or what you will do. Your subconscious only responds to affirmations in real time, as in right now, so speak as though you *already are* what you want to be!

Next, assess all your associations and surround yourself with those in agreement with you. One reason I

agreement with myself. In that state, people won't move with you. I had not yet dealt with my personal wounds, hang-ups, and baggage. A fear of failure and poverty constantly pulled me out of agreement.

My mom was a maid and there were times I had to drop her off to work at a wealthy person's home. I saw those mansions and thought, "I'll never be able to have that." So, whenever I did achieve even a measure of wealth, I ended up spending it all so that I would eventually be broke again—agreeing with my original subconscious belief of poverty.

When I was finally ready to agree on the inside with being a person who would become a household name and change the world, then things started to happen. Agreement is a state of being. Agreement is a

total commitment. It can be very uncomfortable and downright painful at times, but the result is worth it.

You must agree to paying the price of being a winner. Winners are ready mentally and physically. Winners expect and prepare ahead of time. When the opportunity presents itself, the winner moves into that vacuum and exploits it. In their minds, they're already champions. They've dominated. It's that "win before you begin" principle. Expectation creates manifestation.

The mindset of a winner challenges society's status quo. A key component of a winner's mindset is the willingness and ability to lose. Every time they step onto a court, every time they compete, they are making the agreement, "Although I expect to win, there is still a chance that I can lose."

Now, I don't mean losing in the game of life, but perhaps losing some popularity, some friends, some respect of others; or even losing the appearance of wealth. You must be willing to lose in order to win. A winner has to be willing to put it all down, to put it all aside and say, "I don't care. My goal is to win overall." A winner does not play simply for the applause of other people. A winner plays for the win.

When an NFL football player is trying to score a touchdown (and I know all about that!), the last thing on his mind is how good he looks. He is not thinking, "How clean is my uniform?" He doesn't have time for that. He's focused on, "I'll score the touchdown, and you'll be satisfied with the win." He doesn't dance to you; he is the rhythm. He is the thermostat, not the thermometer.

There's a big difference between a thermostat and a thermometer. A thermometer *reads* the temperature. It is affected by the environment. It reacts. On the other hand, a thermostat *sets* the temperature. It responds by actually *changing* the environment. A winner also responds to his or her environment and sets the temperature for everyone else to enjoy.

Note that it may take some time to get to that place or stage on your journey. A tough thing to accept is that on the path to winning, a lot of great people were rejected in the beginning. A lot of trendsetters were disregarded while they were alive, then years later, they are revered as heroes—like Picasso, like Beethoven, like Einstein.

Be prepared that a winner's path can be a lonely path. Find out what everyone else is doing and do the

opposite. Walk the narrow path, and know that it's fine if you have to walk the path alone, at least at first.

1. Are you living by an image or by an identity?

2. Who is truly on your team and who is not?

3. Do you have the guts to walk alone if necessary?

NOTES:

Chapter 4: Focus on Your Vision

If you recall, during my first year of junior college football, I mentioned that I did not get to step onto the field at all—not one documented play, but I went back the next year anyway. One day, I was in my dorm room watching football, and there were three or four guys in the room with me. In a Freudian slip, I shouted, “Man, I’ve always wanted to play Division 1 NFL football!”

One guy stood up, turned down the TV, looked at

you're not strong enough, you're not fast enough, I want you to be realistic." The other guys agreed. "You aren't playing now, so what makes you think you'll even make it out of here?"

They began to laugh and joke, and I had my head down. I walked out to the practice field about 20 yards away from the dorm, and I yelled as loud as I could, "All I have is a dream!" No one believed in me, my friends didn't believe in me, half my family didn't believe in me, and there was a part of me that didn't believe in me.

After the next football game was over and the guys had gone, and I walked back to the dorm room. I pulled out a sheet of paper, and I wrote down three letters, NFL. I put it on the wall and every day I woke up and said, "NFL, that's where I'm going." Every night before I

went to sleep I took one last look and I said, “NFL, that’s where I’m going.” That became my focus.

One day, the same guys came in and they looked up and said, “What’s that, Shawn, your poster?” They all began to laugh and I said, “No, that’s where I’m going.” They joked again, but this time I looked at them and said, “You know what? If I wanted to do stuff that’s illegal, you’d probably support me, but when I’m trying to go for my dream, you’re laughing at me.”

That told me something right then and there and I kicked them all out of my room. True friends will never compromise your goals, your dreams, or your standards. If your friends are against your dream and vision, well, your friends are against you. If life is at war with your dreams, then life is at war with you.

I began to fight, and every day I would see that paper: “NFL, that’s where I’m going.” It took a lot of pain and a lot of perseverance, but I became a seven-year professional football player. Why? Because I focused on the *vision*. When you write your dream down and plan for it, you take it from one realm to another; from the invisible to the visible.

So where is your vision today? Did you have a dream earlier in life, but now you’ve got additional responsibilities to take care of and you’ve lost yourself? Many times, our dreams get lost in those three traps I talked about before: division, distraction, and deception.

Let’s review those three vision-stranglers: If you have division, i.e. “I could do this, but I want to do that” or “I’m going here, but I should go there”, you will not

divided against itself cannot stand. You must have a single vision.

Having distraction in your life will move you off course from your vision. You'll end up at a destination you never intended. Keep yourself on the path that matters or use tools to get back on course.

The last vision-killer is deception. I do about 75 school assemblies each year and I hear aspiring athletes and honor students who think that they can do drugs and still practice well. They think they can study under the influence and still get A's and B's.

Yes, they have the vision, but now they've given their life over to deception. Partaking in something illegal and immoral is not the highway to their destiny. It's not going to work.

A perfect antidote to the 3D triple-threat is to triangulate your life. To effectively triangulate your position using a GPS, you need three coordinates: where you are, where you're going, and a fixed point. You will come up against obstacles that attempt to throw you off course or block your progress, but if you can focus and lock in, you will eventually move into your desired manifestation. Concentrate and navigate by those three points. Focus separates amateurs from professionals.

Everything and anything that interferes with your focus must be reduced or removed. That may include things that are good in and of themselves, but they are not moving you toward your goal. Eliminate. It seems systematic and ruthless, but it's necessary. You only have so much time and energy each day, and there are

In addition, you need to be passionate about what I call the “all-in effect”. This is very serious. Let’s look at the example of Orville and Wilbur Wright, brothers who wanted to learn how to master manned flight. They were in competition with another guy, Samuel Langley, who was experimenting with machines called Aerodromes.

Langley had all the accolades, including the adoring press and the backing of the American government, but he didn’t have the “all-in, never-gonna-quit” mindset. As the story goes, the day that the Wright Brothers flew their plane, Langley gave up on his idea.

So many people try to take on adventures or go into endeavors or relationships without being all in. If you don’t have the “all-in” mindset in life, you’re not

To be all in, you must have agreement in spirit, soul, and body. You line yourself up and focus on that one small point. Tell yourself, “That’s where I’m going, no one’s going to stop me. Nothing’s going to deter me.”

If you’ve been wondering, “Why aren’t things happening? I’m not achieving my goals. I’m not moving in the right direction,” it could be that you’re not all in.

This is a reality check for you. Look at that goal and then look at yourself; look at that vision then look at yourself; look at that dream, then look at yourself. Ask that hard question, “Am I all in?”

If you’re not all in, it’s time for you to recalibrate. It’s time for you to reconcile. It’s time for you to re-establish what you’re fighting for, what you’re hungry for. Do this, and I guarantee I’ll be high-fiving you on

the winner's side. Life isn't about success, it's about winning!

1. What has caused you to lose your vision or focus?

2. How will you triangulate to get back on course?

3. What needs to be pruned off in your life?

NOTES:

Chapter 5: Fight Resistance

If you noticed, I'm a firm believer that every single person has a call, a purpose, and a destiny over their life. I'm also a firm believer that you're already born a winner because, despite all the odds, you made it into the world.

Everything that's in you and everything that you're

determined destiny and purpose. Unfortunately, over time those dreams and hopes may dwindle. To illustrate this, I'm going to tell you a story.

One day, a father decided to bring his son to the zoo for one of the first times. At the zoo, the boy is seeing all the animals—the giraffe, the parakeet, and the tiger. Then he sees this 12,000-pound elephant and notices that the elephant is being shackled by just a small chain. He looks up at his father and says, “Daddy, why doesn't the big elephant just break this small chain?”

The father sits his son down and says, “Son, when the elephant was just a baby, they tied a humongous chain to its right ankle. That baby elephant would pull and pull for days, weeks, months, and years, wanting to break away to experience freedom. It would pull and

pull until one day it says to itself, ‘I can’t break the chain again today; I’ll never be able to break it.’”

“Years later, son, they’ll take that fully grown, 12,000-pound elephant and they’ll place it in a zoo or the circus. When the elephant begins to walk, it feels that familiar tug, but it’s not a massive chain anymore, just a small one. That same 12,000-pound elephant could snap 100 chains, but it was conditioned and socialized when it was younger that the one thing it could never do is break those chains, and then the elephant finally believed it.”

Why did this happen? Because the elephant slowly gave in to resistance. It kept experiencing the same result from the same repeated attempts over a few months or years. Eventually, it came to a final conclusion, so that even when conditions had actually

When you were little someone may have told you, “Johnny, you shouldn’t become a musician, it doesn’t pay the bills,” or “You can’t be a doctor, your grades are too low.” Soon, you began to abort and abandon your call because you got offended or wounded. You began to focus on the resistance instead of focusing on the dream.

Remember that I said before, “When you change your focus, you change your life.” Once you lock onto resistance, you’ll soon allow offense, bitterness, pain, and rejection to enter your life and derail your destiny, because now you are out of agreement.

When I was playing football, one of my opponents across from me on the line would talk and talk during the game. His sole purpose was to take my mind off the play and focus on him. Once I did that, he brutalized me.

When I finally realized what he was doing, he just became another piece of chatter. I blocked him out. I knew where I was going, I knew who I was, and I knew my assignment. If you can ever learn how to fight resistance and overcome, you will change the world.

In fact, resistance is a secret ingredient to winning. It's like lifting weights in the gym. You can lift all day with 5 pounds on the bar, but you're not going to get very far. When you put 50, 100, then 200-lb weights on the bar and you start lifting and pulling against the resistance, that's when you get strong.

The reason why so many people don't grow is that they shield their lives from resistance and avoid conflict. They won't grow. They'll stay right there. You actually need resistance to grow. When an airplane flies, it works

the resistance of friction with thrust, and then it can go soaring into the air like an eagle.

Hand in hand with resistance comes the notion of pressure. People want great things, but they're not willing to deal with the pressure it brings. Facts and figures inform, but pressure transforms.

When you're in school and the teacher gives a pop quiz, it's pressure. When the coach says, "We're running three extra laps today," more pressure. When your boss says you need to increase your sales by 15% this month, crazy pressure.

We all must answer to pressure in our lives. Pressure brings out what is hidden on the inside. One of my favorite sayings is "*No pressure, no diamond!*" A diamond starts out as a coal-like substance. Once

transformed over time into a precious and valuable gem.

So it is with us: *No pressure, no diamond!*

1. What or where are chains holding you back?

2. Are you escaping or embracing resistance?

3. What diamond is forming by pressure in your life?

NOTES:

Chapter 6: Build Your Capacity

Once you push past resistance, there's another obstacle that you must deal with. It's a hidden obstacle, and it's called capacity. In other words, are you large enough for your dream? I encourage you to dream big, but do you have the capacity to fulfill your vision?

Let's say you have a cup. The cup represents you, and I'm going to open a bottle of water which represents your dream. I'm going to begin pouring the water into your cup. Currently, there's not an issue so I'll pour some more. As it fills up it's becoming an issue because your dream is bigger than that. I'll keep pouring...

Finally, we get to the brim and you say, "It's still bigger." At this point, one of two things will happen:

missed opportunities, lost employment, lost wealth, and wasted hope because there's not enough capacity.

Dreams are wasted because you weren't taught to build capacity. Certain people and organizations know this, but such information is not taught to the masses. I'm going to teach it to you today so you can strengthen and build your capacity:

Think about this: *Before you build up, you must build down.* A foundation for growth and expansion must be planned for in advance. For example, look at the properties of airports in large or growing cities. In the distance, you may see huge fields or a golf course. Why?

That is the airport's territory, and they're leasing it out for now, but in 10 or 15 years when it's time for them to expand, they're going to tear that golf course down

and build more terminal space. They have already built in additional capacity.

Another example—how about that guy named Walt Disney? Mr. Disney had a vision for an amazing theme park. After several failures, he was finally able to build a beautiful theme park called Disneyland, and everyone loved it.

People would travel far and wide to go to Disneyland, but after a while, Disney had a challenge. His dream was bigger than the acres he had in Anaheim, California. He no longer had enough space to grow because he was land-locked.

He secretly went to Orlando, Florida, and opened several shell companies. He started buying up tracts of land: 40 acres here, 100 acres there, 500 more—all under

One day, an investigative reporter got suspicious and started doing some research. He found out that all this property was being purchased by Walt Disney. By then, Walt had already amassed 28,000 acres—enough so that today, Walt Disney owns real estate even though he's dead. There's still space for theme park expansion long after he's gone. That's what you call legacy!

How about the McDonald's empire? In 1948, a small restaurant was being run by the McDonald brothers. They had a great concept and a decent burger. They had just started franchising in the 1950's when along came a traveling salesman by the name of Ray Kroc to check out their operation.

Ray Kroc sold milkshake machines and knew that McDonald's was already using a few. Yes, he was happy

saw an opportunity. Ray Kroc had a national capacity, plus an international vision. He ended up expanding that empire into the world's most profitable fast food corporation.

Now, let me give you a not-so-pleasant example. The majority of professional athletes that you see on TV, whether football, basketball, or baseball, will be broke within a couple of years after finishing their career. Why? Because although they have amazing physical ability, they don't have financial capacity.

No one shows them how to manage their money, how to invest and multiply it to continue generating income and wealth. All they know how to do is spend it on glitz, glam, and fame, then burn out later.

There are three things that I want to introduce to

words. Every day, take your dream and speak it. Whenever you feel the resistance, start declaring the opposite. Before you can have something in the physical realm, you must put it in the atmosphere, so speak what's going to happen. Meditate on it, practice it. Visualize it. In doing so, you are creating spiritual capacity. Ask some trusted friends to join you.

Point #2 is to have a good mentor; someone who's already been down that road. A mentor, a *good* mentor—is a *tormentor*. I have a couple of those in my life, and I promise you, these people verbally challenge me, push me, and antagonize me to a higher level.

I am so grateful for these mentors! I met with one last week and I promise you, I got shredded for about six or seven minutes, but those minutes saved me thousands

Point #3 is very important: leave and cleave. People are in your life for a season and they're also in your life for a reason. Choose to be around those who are on the path to greatness with you, and then be ready to tell others, "You're not meant to go with me in this season." You can't bring everyone. Please use wisdom, however; I'm not talking about your spouse or child(ren)!

Once you reach this crossroad, things aren't comfortable anymore. Good. They're not meant to be. Remember, if you live your life seeking ease, your comfort zone becomes your casket. Get out of that rut.

To review...

#1: Visualize and speak your dream;

#2: Get a good mentor who is a tormentor;

#3: Leave and cleave strategically

Remember the example of the basketball player who changed teams for a few seasons in order to grow in capacity so he could return home and lead his team to a long-awaited championship? How about the wildly popular R&B songstress having to leave the comfort of her original female group to begin a solo career?

These stars both needed additional capacity to fulfill their dreams. Think about what would've happened if they had not made those tough decisions and plowed through the resistance...their choices were life-changing. These individuals boosted their careers to the stratosphere and impacted millions more as they did so!

Capacity: Dream. Prepare. Build. Expand.

Repeat!

1. Is your capacity empty, full, or overflowing?

2. Who can you enlist as a good (tor)mentor?

3. Who is “out of season” in your life?

NOTES:

Chapter 7: Get Back on the Bike

I speak a lot about adversity. I believe that adversity is one of the secrets to winning. One thing I say is, “*There's always pain before a promotion.*” You always have to deal with pain. What you do with the adversity and pain determines your finishing place.

I also say, “*When you face adversity and get knocked down—if you can look up, you can get up.*”

The one who gets back up usually wins.

One of the examples that I use with adversity is the story of a famous Olympian. He was a sharp-shooter, and he had lost the use of his shooting arm, his right arm, due to a farming accident. He went through a ton of adversity and experienced a lot of pain.

One day he just gets up and walks out of the room, goes to the field, and starts practicing using his other arm. Four years later, he goes back to the Olympics and wins the gold—using his left arm. That’s what you call overcoming adversity!

Another thing that promotes winning is staying on task, like a gyroscope. You can push a gyroscope, but it won’t fall over. It’s locked in. Through all types of adversity, through all types of challenges, winners are hard-set on the goal.

Think again about an airplane. From the moment the airplane leaves the ground, it’s never exactly on course. It’s always going up or down through air pockets or being pushed to the left or right, but since it’s locked onto a target, it’s always correcting itself to the course.

True winners also have a unique ability to maintain the course through adversity and focus through pressure.

Let's look at the example of a child learning how to ride a bike. When they get on the bike, they're usually scared and intimidated. The training wheels have been taken off, so if there are two parents or two helpers around, one does the pushing, and the other, the catching.

The child pedals a couple times, falls to the ground and begins to cry and say, "I don't want to get back on." Reinforcements come in immediately: "You can do it! You can do it! You've got this!" Repeat this process for a day or two and before it's over, the child is riding around the block having a good time.

Many, if not most, see the adversity or struggles in their lives and jump off the bike and never get back on.

They are afraid of failure. Whenever I ask an audience, “How many people know how to ride a bike?”, nearly everyone raises their hand. But then I explain to them, “You actually triumphed because of failure.”

Failure is your friend. Failure is where the lessons are learned. Failure is where you make your adjustments. Unfortunately, people run as fast as they can from failure. They shield their lives from failure; they won’t grow and experience the opportunities. They’re taught not to fail.

Winners are people whose focus is so strong and profound that when they fall off the bike they just get back on and ride into the wind. They begin to win as soon as they decide to try again because *winners look at what they’re going to, not what they are going through.*

Winners respect failure. It's okay to cry and have someone help you get back on the bike. Life gives us the test first and then teaches us how to pass it.

You must be willing to fail. If not, you can't grow. When you care about what others think if you fail, you become stagnant. We spend too much time and energy caring about other people's opinions. Every great person had to cross the barrier of not caring what people thought about them, whether they failed or not.

Get your power back from others. Think about all the things you wanted to try and how public opinion held you in a narrowly confined place. If you fell and no one saw you, you may laugh at yourself and get back up, but if you fell in front of others, would you be crippled by the embarrassment of others seeing you?

Did you know that the average millionaire has filed bankruptcy 2 or 3 times? Or that former NBA superstar Michael Jordan missed the final shot in his games more times than he made them, but he was still willing to take the shot? It takes a lot of gonads to be able to risk failure and not care what others think.

We also need to retrain our children. Stop programming them to fear failure. When they are not afraid of failure, they won't be afraid of the system. And don't *you* be afraid to let them fail!

Challenge them to start businesses, to create inventions, to do something great and change the world. Realize that failure teaches them the lesson for the next time. Tell them to write down the lessons learned from each failure experienced.

I remember when Kobe Bryant was getting only ten points a game one season. He was in a serious drought but he kept shooting, and toward the end of the season, he got it back. Had he stopped in the process, it would have ruined him.

Ironically, when you aren't scared of failure you may be ostracized and persecuted. You could be cut down through the media, through gossip, and through character assassination. People who don't fear failure are a big threat because they don't bow to criticism.

I admire Samuel L. Jackson. His attitude is, "I sooo don't care!" Another individual that has lived through this is Dave Chappelle. He abandoned a highly successful comedy career in the U.S. and moved to South Africa; later he came back on his own terms. He went up

crumble in this situation, but some individuals come out strong enough to really *win*.

Sometimes failure is so painful it paralyzes us. If you burn yourself on a stove as a kid, at first you don't want to go near the stove again, but if you want to learn to cook and eat hot food again, you must eventually master that stove. Determination and state of being separate those who go forward from those who give up.

Back to the story of my life...as I've said, I had so much stacked against me: four learning disabilities, a speech impediment, a lowly 1.62 accumulative GPA, an impoverished background, and psychological issues with low self-esteem. Furthermore, as a former gang member, let's just say my outlook on life was not good.

Nevertheless, somewhere under all of that, my

there was very little on the outside to validate the greatness of my potential on the inside. Thankfully, I made a life-changing decision. I got back on the bike.

As a result, I discovered an entirely different world of winning, of becoming successful outside of the prescribed route. It's like I discovered a detour. I really didn't understand or know at first what was happening and why I was achieving things the way that I was. All I knew was that whenever I would enter certain circles, like the Indiana University football team, half the guys liked me and the other half despised me.

They knew that there was something different about me. Their attitude was like, "How did he get here? He didn't put in the training like we did, and he didn't

not supposed to be here.” But there I was. In time, I began to understand that there are principles that can allow you to circumvent the usual roads in life. If I have been able to achieve a measure of winning with all *my* setbacks, imagine what the average individual with aptitude, skills, and abilities can do!

Our society is intimidated by certain kinds of winners. They are intimidated by those like Mark Cuban, who never finished college. They are intimidated by Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg; they are intimidated by people who go outside of the regular loop, outside of the normal educational channels to win at life.

These winners attained more than a state education which introduces prescribed mindsets and worldviews

winners got *taught*. They learned many valuable life-lessons that came from real-world situations and experiences. On the way, these winners suffered persecution, failures, and setbacks greater than we can imagine but they kept going; they kept getting back on the bike and pedaling toward their set vision and purpose.

I am introducing and teaching principles that winners use so that whether you're a student, an employee, an independent business owner, or a homemaker, you can apply these laws and they will work for you. However, be warned—if you break these laws, they will break *you*...

1. Name some adversities you have overcome:

2. Has there been a time you refused to get back up?

3. What is your perspective of failure now?

NOTES:

Chapter 8: The 212 Effect—Dare to be Different

One of the principles that created recognition for me was daring to be different. This is a difficult thing because when someone is ready to do or be something different, the fear of rejection, people's opinions, isolation, and the fear of being ostracized may pull him/her back.

Peer pressure is powerful. It's like an invisible fence. Whenever you get close to the edge, you start to hear the noise and see the stares, and that's enough to shut you down. But winners don't focus on that. Winners focus on the prize.

All the great thinkers and all the great leaders at one point were criticized because their actions, their

“uncivilized”. If you really understand the concept of being civilized, it means that you are being “brought under” or subdued so that you remain the same as everyone else.

Now, this creates a paradox because we’re all unique and we have different views. Being “politically correct” is a dangerous thing because we are expected to stifle or hinder our opinions of a situation, circumstance, or a person because it might offend someone. However, God has created each one of us as a unique, separate entity and we should be able to express that.

Being uncommon or unique is what they call in the marketing world “The Differential Effect”. It’s what sets you apart and makes you different.

When I was in junior college, I discovered a great

junior colleges out there in the United States. Those 200 junior colleges all had football teams, with right and left tackle positions. If each team had five linemen, I was looking at over 1,000 athletes who could play on the offensive line like me and who would be graduating at the same time.

I knew I had to create some *separation*. One of the things I did was go to summer school after my freshman year at junior college. In the fall of my sophomore year, I took 22 credit hours in hopes of graduating early, which I did. That separated me from most of the other athletes because they were graduating in June. I was graduating in December, and it allowed me to stand out.

I travel and speak to college students all the time. At one particular event, the conversation of a young lady

graduating. Any tips for me?” I felt kind of bad. I responded, “So you’re excited because you are going to step out into the real world and get a good job?” She answered, “Yes, that’s my goal and I’m working on such and such...”.

I asked, “How many people in your class right now are graduating?” She threw out a number, like 40 people at this small college. I said, “OK, so 40 people are graduating in marketing, and let’s very conservatively say there are ten similar colleges in each state (with 40 students graduating in marketing).

“That’s 500 colleges with at least 20,000 people graduating with a marketing degree in the United States. They’re all competing for the same jobs, so are some of the people who graduated last year, not to mention

people who got laid off and are being headhunted, not to mention immigrants. So, what makes you different?”

How can she even compete unless she makes herself distinguishable? Perhaps she adds a unique second major. She must figure out how to capitalize on herself in order to catapult her to winning status. Most people think they need to do lots of stuff to get prepared to win, but real winners are winning already.

Young guys will say, “I wanna play in the NBA!” I challenge them and say, “You know what? You’ve got people from all over the world trying to play for a limited number of teams and spots. What makes you different? What makes others go wow? What makes a person stand up and notice you?”

When I speak at school assemblies or corporate

I bend steel. That's unique. A lot of people can't do that. Wherever I go, I create a separation. That's one of my secrets—things that make you go “Hmmm...”

Separation is very important; that's what you need to use if you want to make it. Find out, perfect, and showcase what makes you different. It's what I call *The 212 Effect*. Basically, water boils at 212 degrees. Water is just hot water at 211 degrees. At 212 degrees, it starts to boil. It changes properties.

Boiling water changed the world. It allowed steam engines to be developed, it kills germs, it helps you cook foods, and the list goes on and on. So, when I ask, “What is your 212?”, I'm asking you what is that extra inch or that extra mile you're willing to run? When the others are sleeping, what are you doing to maximize your time?

One of the examples that I used for my son is for playing football. Football has a certain practice schedule, a certain regimen, so when he first played I made him go the extra mile. I told him, “When everyone else is at home eating Cheerios, watching cartoons, or playing Nintendo, I’m going to work you.”

That year my son not only made the All-Star team, he was MVP of the All-Star team. He was practicing the 212 Effect. It created separation and preparation. If you push yourself a little more, if you go that extra inch or that extra mile, you can accomplish more than good things, you can achieve great things over time!

If you look at a lot of world records, a tenth of a second makes all the difference. Swimming, track, or skiing records are won by a tenth of a second. Bobsled

It's that extra push that makes all the difference. Winning is in the inches, centimeters, and millimeters.

My own 212 happened at junior college. When all the other students were back in the dorm, I would go practice. You'll see that with a lot of winning athletes. They are usually the ones who are the first to get to the gym and the last ones to leave. They might not even have the natural talent, but they're going to outshine you with determination and hard work. So, what is your 212?

When I played with former NFL player Jackie Slater, football practice started at 3:45 p.m. Most players came out around 3:40 p.m.—except Jackie. Jackie would go out at 3:20 p.m. He spent 20 minutes before practice hitting the bags and running through the ropes. That was his 1 extra degree and because of it, he ended up playing

The only thing that turns ordinary people into extraordinary people is a little extra each day. Commit yourself to getting just a bit better each day, and in time, you will excel—you'll win!

1. What sets you apart? What is unique about you?

2. Where in your life will you apply that 212 effort?

3. How can you position yourself to stand out?

NOTES:

Conclusion: Change the Game

You have officially started your journey to your Winning Edge. You've been blessed with so much information, so much game-changing content which will allow you to go out there and not just *affect* but *infect* this world's operational system. It's not only for you but for your legacy.

I mentioned the phrase "game-changing" because I don't believe that you can win the world's game unless you change the world's game. One of my mentors is Dani Johnson and she is a game-changer. Check her out at danijohnson.com. She's an extraordinary teacher and a great conference leader, one of the best I've ever heard in my entire life.

At her conferences, there are over 1,000 people in the room, and she teaches us that 98% of Americans will be dead or dead broke by the time they reach age 65.” Many of the people in the room have played “the game”. They went to school, they studied hard, they saved for their 401k, they did all the proper networking, and still most of them would end up dead broke. So, either the people are wrong, or the system is wrong. Either people are missing the rules, or the real rules are missing.

I had to take a real hard look at that, and I began to implement things that were against the rules. Some things broke the rules and some things weren't even in the rule books. I realized that for me to win this game, I have to change the game.

I'll give you an example. Personally, my family

modest lifestyle—our vehicles and some clothes are dated. We may catch some looks from people, but our debt to equity ratio is fantastic, and we have no credit card debt.

Financial expert Dave Ramsey always says, “Live like no one else, so in the end, you can live like no one else.” We’re on our way to being virtually debt free—no debt at all, and that gives us a ton of freedom. It allows us to turn on a dime and do whatever we need to, whenever we need to, and be generous as well. That’s a winner’s mindset and a game-changer for our family.

Keep in mind that winning involves your entire lifespan. The timeline is not moment to moment or week by week; it’s from beginning to end, and the goal is to get to the end and say, “I had my health, I had my wealth,

I had my family. I have a legacy. I've done what I was sent here to do.”

In other words, like the Apostle Paul said, “I have finished the race. I have won the prize...” I think it's kind of ironic that even the Apostle Paul and the Bible both reference a race, not success. In other words, it's winning versus losing.

My encouragement for you is to go for it, and to use these new rules, tactics, and strategies for you and your legacy. We are all born winners, and winners change the game. You be that game-changer.

People like musical genius James Brown changed the game. Basketball star, Steph Curry, has now changed the game. People believed that a short changed forever.

Let me give you a final example. One day, I found

were sitting around the table, and there were big chips and maybe millions of dollars on the table. I noticed that one guy had fewer chips than all the other guys, and they thought, “He’s not gonna make it, he’s on his way out.”

The guys were making jokes at him, and he’s not saying a word. Then when it’s his turn, he takes both his hands and pushes the chips in the middle. He says the two words that challenged the pride of the players, changed the atmosphere in the audience, and silenced the sportscasters—the room went into a hush. With a calm voice he said, “All in.”

Those confident faces turned serious, some guys began to frown, and some guys began to scratch their heads. At that moment, he created a paradigm. He turned the tables when he said, “All in,” which means

table. He was laying it on the line right then, and it caused the most famous poker players to second-guess themselves and their strategies.

That guy won the round, then another, and another, and went on to place second in that tournament. I walked away with that lesson and I asked myself, “Shawn, are you all in? You were all in when you were playing football, but that’s over; what about now?”

I had to be honest and say “No” because I felt like a warrior on the sidelines of the battlefield. The worst thing you can do to a warrior is take away the war. I looked around at my life and thought, “I am not 100% in on certain things I want to achieve.”

I began to step away and re-evaluate what is causing distractions, what is steering my attention away.

I cut things out to re-align my focus and I tell you what, the results have been phenomenal!

When we look at the examples in history of America's Founding Fathers, there were 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence. Most people think, "Awesome, they made a decree."

No, that wasn't just a decree, that was high treason! If they would've been found out, or if we had lost the Revolutionary War, they would've been executed. They laid it all on the line.

Remember that for you to be all in, you need full agreement in spirit, soul, and body. Know who you are and what your purpose is; choose your *why*. Set your focus, line up your thinking, and say, "That's where I'm going, no one's going to stop me, nothing's going to

resistance and adversity. If you get knocked down, get back up and keep going!

Stay away from the 3-D effects of division, distraction, and deception so that you can carry your vision to completion. Make your vision's "brand" stand out from the crowd by doing what others don't, going where others won't, and being what others aren't—put the 212 Effect into action and give the extra effort that creates the win!

Then, think above and beyond! Prepare for the next level by creating additional capacity. Don't just produce—*reproduce* and expand your dream by helping others or getting others involved!

It all starts by changing your mindset and making a decision to *win before you begin*. Remember, you are

into the world; you're still living despite the many obstacles you have faced, and you are pressing into the quest for greater things. You're reading this book to expand and challenge yourself!

By making note of what I've talked about and putting into practice the 8 Principles I've explained, your "*Inner-Winner*" will manifest and make you victorious in living your life on *The Winning Edge*. Be blessed!

About Shawn Harper

Shawn Harper was one of six children raised in a single-parent household in Columbus, Ohio. The many challenges he faced could have set the course for an unfulfilled and wasted life.

Things began to play out that way until Harper changed his mind and decided to go for the win in life. He fulfilled his dreams of graduating from college and playing in the NFL. Along the way, he discovered an amazing gift that he is now sharing with the world.

Harper's mission is to help as many as possible overcome their own challenges and discover how to live out their God-given potential. Through speaking and writing, he provides wisdom, encouragement, advice, and

As a loving husband and father, owner of a multi-million-dollar business, and traveling as a powerful speaker, author, and motivator, he is living proof that anyone can win!

